

Moonlighting

Position One: Only One Job

Mark is a police officer in a suburban village. Mark's friend, Dan, is an officer in an adjacent city and lives just two miles away. In addition to his officer position, Mark works security at construction sites on weekends. Doing so has allowed him to build an addition on his house and put some money away for a college fund for his kids. Dan's city doesn't allow police officers to hold second jobs so his income is restricted to the money he makes as an officer.

The practice of hiring off-duty police officers as security guards, bouncers, traffic controllers, and in various other positions is increasing. In some localities the practice is banned or regulated and in others it is allowed.

Should police officers be allowed to hold second jobs?

Hiring off-duty police officers for private functions should be illegal. Police officers are public servants who have stressful, demanding jobs. It is in the public interest to restrict their paid activities to their police work so that they are more likely to be well rested and able to concentrate.

Allowing police officers to work for private businesses doing work similar to their on-the-job duties creates many opportunities for conflicts of interest. Officers might be tempted to favor certain businesses in enforcing the law or might have a difficult time being impartial. Police officers are paid to enforce the law for the entire public, not just for those who are able to pay them privately.

Position Two: Reward Ambition

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Hiring off-duty police officers for private functions should be legal. Restricting an officer's off-duty activities is a violation of his rights. There is no reason to restrict an individual's activities unless there is evidence it hampers job performance.

Police officers working privately serve the same function as those on duty, that of protecting the public interest, preventing crime, and keeping the peace; activities that are not in conflict with their on-the-job duties. It is an insult to suggest that police officers are not professional enough to enforce the law fairly. We can't punish officers by taking away income opportunities because of something that might happen.